

Safety Matters

State of Delaware Issue CLXXVII May 2021
Produced by the Insurance Coverage Office

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ELECTRICAL SAFETY TIPS TO HELP PREVENT FIRES

May is National Electrical Safety Month. According to the National Fire Protection Association, electrical cords and temporary wiring account for over 25% of the estimated 81,000 electrical system fires that occur each year. The risk of fires can be reduced by following these essential electrical safety tips.

Extension cord safety rules

Don't use extension cords as a substitute for repairing building wiring or as permanent sources of electricity. Extension cords should be temporary (90 days or less). Inspect extension cords for broken connectors, damaged insulation and missing hardware before each use.
Do not run extension cords through walls, over beams, around corners or through doorways.
Only use extension cords approved for the environment and loads expected.
Equip extension cords with ground fault interruption (GFI) devices.
Don't use coiled extension cords.
Discard damaged extension cords; don't try to repair them.
Use only surge protected power strips. Inspect the power strips regularly for damage or signs of overloading.

Temporary wiring safety rules

Don't substitute temporary and flexible wiring for repairing building wiring.
Use temporary wiring only when needed for maintenance, repair or demolition activities.
Limit temporary wiring for holiday or ornamental lighting to no more than 90 days.
In outdoor settings use only outdoor approved temporary wiring and extension cords.
Don't route temporary wiring across floors, around doors or through walls.
Locate temporary wiring at least 7 feet above any walking or working surface.
Protect temporary wiring from sharp edges, heat and sunlight to avoid breakdown of the insulation.

Equipment power cords safety rules

Inspect equipment cords for damage before each use.
Don't operate equipment cords without a ground connection unless they are double insulated.
Don't splice equipment cords to repair damage or to extend the original length.

Routinely inspect and perform maintenance on electrical equipment

Lock out or tag all electrical equipment or lines while they are being serviced, maintained or adjusted.
Inspect all electrical appliances, such as vacuum cleaners, to ensure they're properly grounded. Cords that are frayed or damaged should be removed and replaced immediately, not spliced or taped. Shut down main power source when replacing fuses.

Safeguards to install on electrical equipment

Write the purpose of each circuit breaker, fuse, or switch on the panel board.
Label all disconnecting switches and circuit breakers.
Consider upgrading outdated circuit breakers.
Make sure there is sufficient access and working space around all electrical equipment for safe operation and maintenance.
Cover all unused electrical openings (including conduit knockouts) with electrical enclosures and fittings.

Do your part to prevent electrical fires by following the above guidelines.

CIRCUIT BREAKER PANEL BOXES

If you and your family are growing both in size and in electrical power needs you may need to consider upgrading your electrical service. As you add more people, appliances, and electrical devices to your home, the power need grows right along with them. This leads to the question, "Is my electrical circuit breaker panel big enough?" More rooms, lighting, and electronic gadgets may add more load to your service panel than it can handle and a service upgrade would be in order. A qualified, licensed electrician can determine the amount of load your panel has on it presently, if you need an upgrade now, and what size is best for you and your family's needs. Simply adding additional outlets and lighting to existing circuit breakers is likely to cause circuit overloads and cause breakers to trip.

LIGHTS AND SWITCHES

Lights that flicker and switches that seem hot to the touch in all likelihood are problems to deal with now. Sizzling and/or popping sounds in and around switches mean that the switches are getting bad. Either loose electrical connections or bad contacts are usually the result of these sounds. Be sure you are using grounded switches and that the copper wire connections are attached properly and secure. Hot switches indicate the circuit may have more load than the switch can handle. Remember, if the lighting is on a 20-amp circuit, please use a 20-amp switch, not a 15-amp switch to accommodate the load.

ELECTRICAL OUTLETS

Outlets can become a problem when the contacts become weak and cords start falling out of them. The fingers inside have a certain tension rating that is required to hold the plug in place. You can buy a tester that checks this tension and gives you a heads-up on whether your outlets are defective. Check for loose electrical connections to the terminals of the outlets and never use the push-in terminals. Replace cracked or broken outlets and wall plates. These can expose connection points and wiring to everyone in the home, especially children.



"Jumped over moon. Impressive."

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH

1. What is black when you buy it, red when you use it and gray when you discard it?
2. What is it that when you take away the whole you still have some left over?
3. Can you name 3 consecutive days without using any of the days of the week?

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SAFE LIFTING TECHNIQUE

Lifting is a part of everyday life for most individuals whether it's a box being lifted at work or a grandchild being lifted while home. Back injuries often occur during lifting and here are some tips to avoid injuring your back while you are lifting.

1. Plan your lift. Ensure you have a clear passage of where you need to move the load. Remove any items that may get in the way or that you might trip over.
2. Stand close to the object you are about to lift. Center yourself over the object with your feet shoulder width apart and stand on a stable base.
3. Bend at the knees to squat down to the floor.
4. Tighten your abdominal muscles. Keep your back straight and bend your knees.
5. Get a good grip on the object with both hands.
6. Use your leg and buttock muscles to stand up, lifting the object off the ground.
7. Remember to 'drive' through your heels.
8. Maintain a 'long', straight spine throughout the lift, using only the muscles in your legs and buttocks to lift the object.
9. Do not twist your body if you need to move the object. Take small steps with your feet turning until you are in the correct position.
10. To change direction, shift your foot position and turn your entire body.
11. When placing the load in the appropriate spot, again bend at the knees, keep your spine straight and use only your leg muscles and buttock to lower the load into place.
12. Never lift anything that is too heavy and don't overexert yourself. If you think the load may be too much for you, ask for help. If you are required to lift many loads, then take frequent breaks in between.
13. Avoid lifting after prolonged sitting or forward bending (such as long drives)
14. Try to minimize the distance you are carrying the heavy object and the period of time you are lifting.
15. Use appropriate tools to help with lifting and transporting heavy objects (such as hoists, dollies, hand trucks, etc.).
16. Where possible, try to reduce the weight of the object being lifted by performing several smaller safe lifts, rather than one heavy unsafe lift.
17. Participating in regular exercise, stretching and core muscle strengthening are good ways to decrease your risk of a back injury from lifting.



When lifting think how an Olympic weight-lifter or small child lifts. Essentially they keep a straight back and use their buttock muscles by bending at the hips pushing the buttocks back during the lift. The buttock muscles are the strongest muscles in the body and must be engaged for proper lifting.

SAFETY TIP OF THE MONTH

Are you working in zombie mode?

Everyone has had the experience of driving somewhere familiar then suddenly realizing they didn't remember the drive. Loss of focus is called autopilot, and it can be as dangerous at work as it is on the road.

One technique to keep yourself out of autopilot is becoming a sort of fortune teller, safety consultant Tim Page-Bottorff told Safety and Health Magazine. Start the day with these questions:

When and where will I be likely to go into zombie mode?

What time do I go on autopilot?

What would be the most dangerous situation to be on autopilot?

These questions can raise awareness of potentially unsafe situations and send a mental cue to zap yourself back into the moment.

On the job, in the car or even cutting up vegetables for dinner -- wherever you tend to zone out, try the STOP technique:

Stop what you are doing.

Take a deep breath.

Observe your surroundings.

Proceed with awareness.

Anything that interferes with situational awareness puts people in danger, whether they are driving or climbing a ladder. Talking on a cell-phone or wearing headphones are common distractions that can be dangerous.



QUOTATION OF THE MONTH

A great attitude
becomes a great
day which becomes
a great month
which becomes
a great year
which becomes a
great life.

- Mandy Hale

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE



"Five minute energy drink...for those times when you want to race around the house for no reason whatsoever."

RIDDLES OF THE MONTH ANSWERS

1. Charcoal
2. Wholesome
3. Yesterday, today and tomorrow

